



Aalborg Universitet

AALBORG UNIVERSITY  
DENMARK

## Evaluating the Social Sciences and Humanities in Context – a Discussion Paper

Beiner, Theresa; van den Besselaar, Peter; Jacquemin, Johan; Pedersen, David Budtz; Rafols, Ismael; Sivertsen, Gunnar; Zraek, Jacek

*Published in:*  
Constitutional Law Review

*DOI (link to publication from Publisher):*  
[10.15804/ppk.2020.03.09](https://doi.org/10.15804/ppk.2020.03.09)

*Creative Commons License*  
Other

*Publication date:*  
2020

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Beiner, T., van den Besselaar, P., Jacquemin, J., Pedersen, D. B., Rafols, I., Sivertsen, G., & Zraek, J. (2020). Evaluating the Social Sciences and Humanities in Context – a Discussion Paper. *Constitutional Law Review*, 3(55), 153-175. <https://doi.org/10.15804/ppk.2020.03.09>

### General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal -

### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at [vbn@aub.aau.dk](mailto:vbn@aub.aau.dk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

**Theresa Beiner<sup>1</sup> Peter van den Besselaar<sup>2</sup>**  
**Johan Jacquemin<sup>3</sup> David Budtz Pedersen<sup>4</sup>**  
**Ismael Rafols<sup>5</sup> Gunnar Sivertsen<sup>6</sup> Jacek Zralek<sup>7</sup>**

**Statement: Evaluating the Social Sciences and  
Humanities in Context – a Discussion Paper**

**Keywords:** research; knowledge production; research evaluation; impact assessment; social sciences and humanities

**Słowa kluczowe:** badania naukowe; twórczość naukowa; ewaluacja nauki, ocena wpływu badań naukowych, nauki społeczne i humanistyczne

---

<sup>1</sup> ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5465-3507, J.D., Nadine Baum Distinguished Professor of Law, William H. Bowen School of Law, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. E-mail: tmbeiner@ualr.edu.

<sup>2</sup> ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8304-8565, Ph.D., Department of Organization Sciences; Network Institute, Vrije Universiteit, Netherlands. E-mail: p.a.a.vanden.besselaar@vu.nl.

<sup>3</sup> ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4178-8629, Ph.D., D.Sc., University of Tours, Laboratoire PCM2E, Tours, France; Materials Science and Nano-engineering, Mohammed VI Polytechnic University, Ben Guerir, Morocco. E-mail: jj@univ-tours.fr.

<sup>4</sup> ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7861-7068, Ph.D., Impact Studies at Aalborg University Copenhagen, Humanomics Research Centre, University of Aalborg, Copenhagen, Denmark. E-mail: davidp@hum.aau.dk.

<sup>5</sup> ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6527-7778, Ph.D., Centre for Science and Technology Studies, Leiden University, Leiden, Netherlands. E-mail: i.rafols@cwts.leidenuniv.nl.

<sup>6</sup> ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1020-3189, Ph.D., Professor, Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education, Oslo, Norway. Email: gunnar.sivertsen@nifu.no.

<sup>7</sup> ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2813-8557, Ph.D., D.Sc., Institute of Law, Faculty of Law and Administration, University of Silesia in Katowice, Katowice, Poland. E-mail: jacek.zralek@us.edu.pl.

**Abstract**

The text presents the course and conclusions of the discussion on evaluation of research in social sciences and humanities. The results of social sciences and humanities research can, on the one hand, be of significant local importance, and, on the other, require an appropriate international context. These conflicting trends are difficult to balance. A further difficulty is the attempt to reduce the evaluation of research results in social sciences and humanities to the effects of publication in ranking journals. This trend gives rise to many pathological phenomena (related, for example, to the increase in the cost of publication in journals and other ranked publications). The dominance of the ranking system of journals within the framework of financing scientific disciplines has negative impacts on aspects of academic activity beyond the publication of research results. Teaching activities and university relations with the wider world may suffer. In the course of the discussion an attempt is made to respond to these threats.

**Streszczenie****Kontekstowa ewaluacja badań w naukach społecznych i humanistycznych – dyskusja**

W tekście przedstawiono przebieg oraz wnioski z dyskusji dotyczącej sposobów ewaluacji badań naukowych w naukach społecznych i humanistycznych. Wyniki badań w naukach społecznych i humanistycznych z jednej strony mogą mieć istotne znaczenie lokalne, a z drugiej wymagają odpowiedniego kontekstu międzynarodowego. Te kolidujące tendencje trudne są do pogodzenia. Kolejna trudność polega na próbie sprawdzenia oceny wyników badań naukowych w naukach społecznych i humanistycznych do efektów publikacji w czasopismach punktowanych. Trend ten powoduje powstanie wielu zjawisk patologicznych (związanych przykładowo ze wzrostem kosztów publikacji w czasopismach punktowanych). Dominacja systemu oceny punktowej czasopism w ramach finansowania nauki wpływa z kolei negatywnie na inne aspekty działalności akademickiej niż publikacja wyników badań. Ucierpieć może działalność dydaktyczna oraz kontakty uczelni ze światem zewnętrznym. W toku dyskusji próbowano odpowiedzieć na powyższe zagrożenia.

## I. Introduction

The text is a partial transcription of oral contributions from participants and panellists during the second day of the conference, “Future of the Sciences in the Light of Authorship Laws, Researcher’s Ethical Codes and Government Evaluation of the Quality of Research”.

The first part consists of presentations prepared by panellists, while the second part a moderated discussion on the evaluation policy is provided. Since the text is a digest of the debate, it might not fully reflect the views of the participants.

## II. Individual presentations

**Peter van den Besselaar**

### **Performance, evaluation and the organization of research**

In discussions on evaluating the social sciences and humanities (SSH), the tension between international orientation and local/national orientation is a recurring issue. The idea is that the SSH should also be oriented towards local problems, and that an increasing international approach is detrimental to local relevance and responsibilities of the SSH. Adoption of *performance-based funding systems* would increase the problem, especially if performance was measured in terms of publication in international journals.

Two strategies are frequently proposed to solve this tension: (i) expanding the list of accepted publication media far beyond the bibliometric databases to fully include national journals and other publication types, which subsequently create national specific databases as e.g., in the Norwegian model and (ii) opening access to publications to allow for a large variety of audiences (knowledge users). I will argue that this is probably not the optimal solution:

(i) Like the sciences and the medical field, the SSH are also increasingly international. For evaluating *scientific performance*, international peer reviewed publications may be the correct choice. I will argue that in most fields adding local language publications will do little to change the evaluation outcomes.

(ii) An increased international orientation may lead to a decline of national language publications. Would that endanger the societal relevance of

the SSH? Probably not, as knowledge dissemination to societal stakeholders is rarely based on reading publications, but a variety of ‘productive interactions’ between researchers and societal stakeholders. Evaluating the *societal relevance* should take those interactions into account, more than focusing on publications.

### **Gunnar Sivertsen**

#### **Internationalization, societal relations and research evaluation in the social sciences and humanities**

Internationalization is important for research quality and for the specialization into new themes in the social sciences and humanities (SSH). Interaction with society, however, is just as important in these areas of research for realizing the ultimate aims of knowledge creation. This contribution to the conference will demonstrate how the heterogeneous publishing patterns of the SSH may reflect and fulfil both purposes. The limited coverage of the SSH in Scopus and Web of Science will be discussed along with ideas about how to achieve a more complete representation of all the languages and publication types that are used in the SSH. A dynamic and empirical concept of balanced multilingualism will be introduced to support combined strategies for internationalization and societal interaction through appropriate research evaluation procedures.

### **David Budtz Pedersen**

#### **Research Impact and Quality Assessment Beyond Bibliometrics**

Although governments and research funding bodies have shown considerable interest in developing new frameworks for mapping the academic and societal impact of research, there is still considerable focus on publications and publication-driven metrics and rewards. In this presentation, the author reflects upon the deeper roots for this focus and considers the strengths and weaknesses of traditional publication formats as vehicles for academic and societal knowledge exchange. Looking at current trends within the publication landscape and extrapolating future developments within the field, the presentation provides a number of examples of knowledge products and nanopublications beyond traditional publishing formats, such as reports, white

papers, blogs, reviews, data, software, audio-visual etc. For this purpose, the presentation introduces key building blocks for a new taxonomy of academic outputs and publications beyond journal articles and monographs. This taxonomy serves as the background for designing Responsible Impact Assessments by allowing researchers and universities to have significant influence on how their research outputs are represented and communicated. Moving beyond simplistic indicators for publications, co-authorships and citations, this intervention outlines a new approach to assessing research impact and evaluating knowledge exchange among a large web of actors and institutions.

### **Theresa Beiner**

#### **The role of interdisciplinary research and writing in international and U.S. publishing**

I will address three things: (1) the rise of interdisciplinary research that relies (sometimes heavily) on social science and humanities (2) how local research can be useful and can appeal to broader audiences (along with helping to solve local problems); and (3) the importance of accessibility of research (even localized) through internet resources making it matter less and less where your research is published.

Various disciplines are increasingly influenced by others. The “Law and” movement in the United States is so vibrant that law teachers in the U.S. are grouped by subjects. These groupings now include: Law & Accounting; Law & Economics; Law & Literature; Law & Medicine; Law & Psychiatry; Law & Neuroscience; Law & Religion; Law & Science; Law & Social Science. This is evidence of how important these disciplines are to the evolution of law and policy. Indeed, interdisciplinary research has been key for the development of laws in the areas of environmental and natural resources, corporations, finance, health care, criminal law as well as other areas of law<sup>8</sup>.

The entire Law & Society movement is based on the idea of interdisciplinary scholarship. The Law & Society Association has annual conferences in which scholars from a variety of disciplines convene. The organization describes itself as “an interdisciplinary scholarly organization committed to so-

---

<sup>8</sup> J.B. Ruhl, M.P. Vandenberg, S.E. Dunaway, *Total Scholarly Impact: Law Professor Citations in Non-Law Journals at 15*, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3451542> (10.04.2020).

cial scientific, interpretive, and historical analyses of law across multiple social contexts”. Its annual conference is held outside the United States at least every five years.

I’ll use my research in Employment Discrimination law as an example. It relies heavily on psychology and sociology. In reading sexual harassment cases, I found myself disagreeing with the court on what constitutes sexual harassment. I began to wonder if I had an unusual view when compared to the average American. The legal standard in the U.S. for what is sexual harassment relies on a reasonable person standard. This led me to studies by psychologists who had surveyed people about what they considered to be cases of sexually harassment. A majority of Americans – both men and women – agreed with me. That led me to wonder why judges were viewing this differently. I looked to the work of political scientists to determine if race and gender of the judge might be making a difference in these cases. Political science research revealed that sex, race, and political party of a judge correlated with the way they ruled in employment discrimination cases. I’ve recently picked up a book by a philosophy professor at Cornell University that will no doubt inform my approach to sex discrimination law.

In the United States, as in other countries, there is a vibrant Comparative Law community that looks at laws beyond country borders to see what might work within our countries. This highlights how important local research is. There are six journals alone in the United States that have comparative or transnational law in the title, and many international law journals that allow US legal scholars to examine what is or is not working in other countries to help figure out what might work here.

Other countries look at the development of other nation’s laws to help formulate approaches in their legal systems, especially to cover new types of claims. I research and write in the area of Sexual Harassment Law. I was at an international conference speaking about problems with the U.S. law of sexual harassment and was approached by a scholar from Israel who informed me that Israel had just based its own sexual harassment law on U.S. law, and she was disappointed that she had not heard my presentation earlier.

In the U.S., legal scholarship is mostly funded by academic institutions. As the Dean of my law school, I fund the scholarship of my faculty. My faculty have set their own standards for scholarly production. Legal scholars in the

U.S. publish in student-run journals. Very few legal journals in the U.S. are peer edited. Thus, biases against scholars at “less” prestigious schools can interfere with publication placement. As a result, I do not care where my faculty publish, because the internet makes their research widely available. There are three main legal scholarship databases in the U.S, in which all U.S. law journals are searchable. Thus, access is the key to scholarship, and the ability to find scholarly articles in a search matters most. My school sponsors a scholarship depository that makes our work easily searchable on the internet, further reducing the importance of where my faculty publish.

### **Ismael Rafols**

#### **Contextualisation for Responsible Metrics**

In recent years a variety of initiatives such as the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), the Leiden Manifesto or the Metric Tide, have emphasized that the use of indicators in research assessment is often problematic. Therefore, metrics need to be handled with care in evaluation. Before deciding the indicators used for assessment, it is important first to think thoroughly about the goals of an evaluation, the mission and context of research. I will propose that in most evaluation exercises, indicators are most useful when contextualized according to the goals and contributions in specific disciplines and places. In the face of centralized evaluation systems that struggle with contextualization, I will highlight the importance of carrying out the assessment with an understanding of the local conditions, in order to genuinely foster improvements in research in a variety of qualities such as international collaboration or reputation.

### **Johan Jacquemin**

#### **Evo(lu(a)tion of Scientific Research. A Look Through an Editor's Eye**

This talk will be articulated on the author's scientific experiences gained in the UK and France to highlight the main differences on the evaluation of academics in both countries. The impacts of publication records, H-index, grant income and outreach activities on promotions or awards will be compared. Furthermore, given that the journal impact factor and H-index are two “important” criteria used to evaluate or drive research, this talk will use the author's editorial experience, key editorial/referee issues such as (self-)plagia-



rism, ghost, guest or gift authorship, redundant (duplicate) publications or fabricated (modified) data to provide evidence that such issues are often related to extreme pressure to publish and that certain authors are desperate enough to do anything to attain more publications to their names.

### **III. Moderated discussion**

#### **Jacek Zrałek**

In Poland we are engaging in serious discussions on the recent higher education reform introduced by the Polish government. It would be impossible to explain the whole picture of the reforms to our guests. However, I can introduce results from my own examples. Strong tensions exist in the university research development due to the evaluation of publications and the ranking list of scientific journals according to points given according to a ministry ordinance. This journal and publication evaluation is highly technical and bureaucratic. The pressure on publications is subsequently reflected in university assessment policies imposed on individual researchers.

As a consequence, I spent the last two weeks producing a paper which will be published in a journal that counts for a certain number of points according to the ministry ordinance. Last year I spent several months doing international and interdisciplinary research to attend a conference, for which I produced an article that will probably be counted for the same number of points as my more recent work. It brings me to the conclusion that such a system is completely detached from the real value of scientific work, since it can equalize a two-week local research with a half-year interdisciplinary survey. There is one more frightening phenomenon: a few weeks ago I received an email inviting me to publish a chapter in a monograph (valued in points the same as each of the above articles) provided I pay approximately 400 Euros. This means that the system includes elements of corruption that encourage researchers to publish for money irrespective of the real scientific value of their work. Technical evaluation of “success” in the social sciences and humanities promotes those who can accommodate themselves to artificial requirements rather than those who challenge the deficits of our society.

Is there a way to create an evaluation system resistant to such processes?

**Gunnar Sivertsen**

Norway has a publication point system which has been adopted in a few other countries as well<sup>9</sup>, but it seems to differ from what you explain as the Polish system in at least four ways. Firstly, we do not regard it as a national research evaluation system. We have another system taking care of evaluation, and it is based on international panels of experts<sup>10</sup>. The bibliometric point system, on the other hand, is a component in a partly indicator-based institutional funding system. Norway separates the two purposes and uses different methods for each of them, unlike e.g. the UK<sup>11</sup>.

Secondly, the bibliometric indicator was designed by the collaborative effort of all the Norwegian research institutions, and not by the government. Furthermore the governance of the indicator is based on the same collaboration and disciplinary panel structure. Journals are evaluated by national disciplinary panels<sup>12</sup>.

Third, care is taken to allow for a balanced multilingualism in the incentive structure of the indicator. English as a language, or certain commercial databases, or the journal impact factor, are not used for defining hierarchies of values<sup>13</sup>. As an example, there are more highly rated national journals on the law list than on the economics list, because a larger part of law research is related to national law.

Fourth, the publication indicator has a relatively small effect on funding (1,6% of total budgets) and is therefore unlikely to influence publication behaviour more than can be reasonably expected. The publication system still gets a lot of attention, even if it is not crucial to the allocation of funds, because it reflects a kind of standard of research that you actually do research and publish.

**Peter van den Besselaar**

It is often argued that indicator-based evaluation systems have perverse effects. The classic example is the Australian system implemented in

---

<sup>9</sup> <https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/jdis/3/4/article-p3.xml?lang=en> (10.04.2020).

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.forskningsradet.no/en/statistics-and-evaluations/Evaluations> (10.04.2020).

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/palcomms201778> (10.04.2020).

<sup>12</sup> <https://npi.nsd.no> (10.04.2020).

<sup>13</sup> <http://bid.ub.edu/en/40/sivertsen.htm> (10.04.2020).

the 1990s. It based the research funding of universities (partly) on their numbers of international publications. It was claimed that the system would lead to more quantity, but at the expense of quality. However, analysis of the Australian development showed that both productivity and quality (impact) of the Australian research output increased<sup>14</sup>. We should not overestimate the unintended and perverse effects of indicators if they are used correctly.

### **David Budtz Pedersen**

Scientific knowledge dissemination includes scholarly as well as non-scholarly communication. For decades, incentives and metrics have focused almost exclusively on publication performance and impact (citations). Indicators, infrastructure and incentives need to encourage reward for other research outputs such as policy advice, collaboration, curation, implementation and translation of research. In a purely publication-centric reward system, such knowledge products tend to be undervalued and hence discouraged. A commentary in *Nature* from 2016 framed the dilemma precisely: “Publications that directly influence patient care are weighted no higher in evaluations than any other paper, and less if the work appears in the grey literature (official reports rather than in scientific journals). Researchers are actively discouraged from pursuing publications that might improve medicine but would garner few citations. ... Publication pressure is keeping scientists from doing what really matters”<sup>15</sup>. Some of the most important impact pathways for scientific knowledge production lie beyond the journal article – and should be rewarded in appropriate ways. The discrepancy between evaluation criteria and the social impact of research needs to be reduced.

### **Ismael Rafols**

Conditions in different countries vary widely. One cannot easily transfer patterns from one country to another. For example, one should consider the

---

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1751157717301943> (10.04.2020).

<sup>15</sup> R. Benedictus, F. Miedema, M.W.J. Ferguson, *Fewer numbers, better science*, “*Nature*” 2016, vol. 538, Iss. 7626, pp. 453–455, <https://doi.org/10.1038/538453a> (10.04.2020).

type of activities undertaken by researchers because of the funding situation in various countries. Perhaps in one country it makes sense to have a national system that looks into the publication process by monitoring and influencing the allocation of funds in a minor way. However, this should be only one of the elements in the evaluation system – which should include many more stakeholders (the university administration, the department of the author) that reflects diversity of regional needs. Universities should outline social development goals in particular society.

### **Peter van den Besselaar**

In the Netherlands, the national research evaluation system functions at the level of departments and is not related to funding. The system also does not rely solely on indicators, although publication and citation data are very often part of the evaluation reports.

### **Theresa Beiner**

In the United States, while there are disciplines in which scholarship is supported by the government, such as the sciences, legal scholarship largely is funded by academic institutions. Producing scholarly articles is considered part of a legal academic's job, resulting in law professors in the United States having smaller course loads to compensate for their obligation to produce scholarship. Because law schools usually fund this scholarship, the schools and faculty can set standards for what counts as a scholarly article as well as the types of scholarly journals that are preferred. Highly prestigious U.S. universities such as Harvard or Yale may care about where their faculty publish; however, it matters little to me as the Dean of a lower ranked law school. Because the legal scholarship databases make my faculty's articles very accessible, where they publish is not of significant importance to me in evaluating my faculty's scholarly production.

### **Johan Jacquemin**

Individual evaluation should not be decided exclusively on the basis of bibliometrics results. Once the system concentrates on publications, it leads to the effect that some editors or publishers demand a fee from researchers in return

for publication. In addition, we discovered that people sometimes pay reviewers to receive a desirable review or more even create false email addresses to review their own work. There is also the problem of gift authorship publications – when researchers share credit or claim co-authorship with parties who did not actively contribute to a given article or output. Generally, people should be encouraged to collaborate. Productive research collaboration should be rewarded with points in a perfected evaluation system. Other key indicators not necessarily associated to their publication record should be considered as well, such as outreach, participation in society, administration and education, to cite a few.

### **Gunnar Sivertsen**

Short remarks on the problems of paying to be published: In Norway, there is a trend towards publishing in journals that will publish as many OA articles as quickly as possible and make profits from author payment. The question arises whether this is an optimal path to open science. We need to return to questions of research quality and economy.

### **Ismael Rafols**

We have limited evidence that a strong evaluation system reduces diversity. Evaluation diverts attention from teaching and from social activities, according to comments from researchers from places such as Spain and Italy.

### **Peter van den Besselaar**

It is hard to compare the research practices of Southern and Northern Europe. In the latter, research is conducted mainly in universities, whereas the former bases its work in national research organizations, such as the CNRS in France, the CNR in Italy, and the CSIC in Spain. In universities, research evaluation is likely to put pressure on teaching, though in several places these same systems are implemented for the evaluation of teaching, which may restore the balance – at the expense of an even more increased work pressure. The other point is whether a strong research evaluation system reduces research diversity. There is little research that supports this. It would be good to investigate this more systematically.

**Ismael Rafols**

One of the principles outlined in the Leiden Manifesto states that people are different, and therefore require different forms of support, even within the same department. Universal evaluation is likely to result in the loss of this internal diversity. Evaluation of units instead of single researchers helps sustain such a diversity.

**David Budtz Pedersen**

Scientific reward structures need to allow for different career pathways. Not every researcher can be expected to do the same job over a lifetime, or for that sake the same job as colleagues in the same research group, laboratory, department etc. Researchers take responsibility over different tasks during a career: publishing, teaching, community work, peer review, networking, collaborating, curating data, administrating, managing, etc. The tasks are highly contextual and dependent on the research area, topic, availability of funding and maturation of the research field. While some researchers enrol in stable careers with highly specified tasks, other academics are building new research fields from scratch, establishing journals, networks, associations, and cultivating partnerships, stakeholders and alliances etc. Instead of sticking with universal assessment methods, responsible impact assessments need to take into account different contextual parameters for performance. Rather than subjecting researchers to ‘summative’ evaluations (rankings, points, etc.) a more balanced approach to research evaluation is ‘formative’: give researcher a chance to develop a portfolio of tasks and performances that together constitute the unit of analysis when allocating rewards and promotion

**Jacek Zrałek**

When the evaluation of institutions (universities) influences their financial situation, the institution tends to impose and transfer the evaluation criteria onto particular researchers to ensure that their work will be most efficient from the point of view of institutional evaluation. How in such circumstances can one separate the evaluation of the institution from the evaluation of the researchers?

**Gunnar Sivertsen**

There is an unavoidable influence of national evaluation and funding systems even down to the individual level. Some of the problem is that the national evaluation systems are reviewing and/or measuring the sum of what individuals do instead of more properly evaluating institutions to find how well they do in relation to their organizational purposes and procedures. An organization is always more than the sum of individual achievements. An organization can for example be evaluated on how it provides a good basis for individual achievements in research.

**Johan Jacquemin**

The feedback from evaluation is very important. Let me compare shortly how the system looks like in France and in the UK and more precisely how the individual evaluation looks like. In France an online system allows academic staff to submit an activity report every 4 years. This report is then evaluated by experts from the same research field (i.e. from the same French National Board of Universities section) outside their own university. In the case of a given academic, who is performing their job normally, no real feedback is provided, which is in fact totally frustrating and useless. Nevertheless, actions are solely taken in case of identified problems and/or highlighted issues in a given evaluation report. However, such an individual evaluation should provide to each researcher key indicators of how they could improve to reach a higher level. In that view, this evaluation and its feedback should not be based on papers but on actions (administrative, education and research tasks) they undertake and/or must do to be promoted. In the UK, the individual evaluation (appraisal) is done directly by the Director of Research (or line manager) every year, which is an opportunity to reflect and review the skills and expertise acquired as an academic and more importantly the improvement to be made in order to be promoted. During such an exercise, key objectives in research (publications, grant applications, collaborations, etc.), leadership (projects management, committee contribution, research planning, etc.), impact (outreach, public engagement, knowledge transfer, industry partnership, etc.) and education (teaching, supervision, mentoring, etc.) are discussed in detail to encourage the appraised to review their career progression, by identifying gaps and developing strategies to move forward.

**Peter van den Besselaar**

Also in the Netherlands, research evaluation does focus on a broad set of issues, in addition to the evaluation of research productivity and impact: research funding, quality of the PhD training and supervision, the diversity of the research staff, the societal impact of research, and the viability of the research program. The system of evaluation is principally a tool to learn from.

**David Budtz Pedersen**

First it is necessary to decide what must be changed and what are the achievement goals. Only then can pathways and indicators be implemented to achieve these goals. The goals are however very diverse depending on the disciplines and fields of knowledge. It requires a variety of indicators that need to be applied.

**Question from the audience**

The problem of the language issue: there is a different structure to every language; it influences the outcome of the research if it is presented in a particular language.

**Gunnar Sivertsen**

I know from my own experience that the language issue is crucial in some fields. In literature studies, the written language needs to be rich and varied. In quantitative science studies, my other field, precision and consistency are more important, and relatively low level English is tolerated.

**Ismael Rafols**

The so-called international research community tends to unify, while there are still huge differences that do not only come from language issues, but also from cultural diversities that are not adequately addressed.

**Comment from the audience**

In certain disciplines national languages disappear and all major publications are published in English. Should there be some preferences for those who try to sustain scientific national languages?



**Peter van den Besselaar**

In the past there was already Latin that was the major language for the international academic community, so from this perspective English seems much better and much more universal. But of course, in some fields, such as law, publications will remain in the national language – as they reflect on national laws and regulations.

**Johan Jacquemin**

In China some papers that are international are translated in English, while others sustain to be local and are published in Chinese. With improvement of artificial intelligence and translation tools, in the short run it will no longer be important in what language the text is prepared. Especially in natural science, but one can imagine proper translation of legal texts in the longer perspective.

**Gunnar Sivertsen**

China is very interesting, because we are facing two extremes: 30 years ago, publishing in foreign languages was very limited there. Later on, strong incentives to publish abroad were introduced. Recently, they seem to be turning back to a kind of scientific nationalism.

**Question from the audience**

What is the impact of globalization of evaluation? What are advantages and disadvantages to centralized v. decentralized systems of evaluation? The US system of evaluation seemed contrary to what Theresa Beiner mentioned, because it seemed very concentrated on the journals and its rankings. The system seems like decentralized, but there is the Ivy League at the same time.

**Theresa Beiner**

In the United States, standards for legal scholarship are determined from the bottom up. My faculty set their own scholarly requirements. My school is not one of the most prestigious in the United States. Faculty members at law schools at Harvard, Yale, or Stanford likely are under some pressure to publish in law journals affiliated with more “prestigious” law schools. However,

that is not all or even most law schools in the United States. However, there is not a majority way for schools in the U.S. to approach this, while the system is generally developed from the bottom.

### **Ismael Rafols**

When the system is decentralized, there are different tools and different goals and it supports the diversity of research. The diversified system serves to the diversity of functions that are reflected by universities.

### **Gunnar Sivertsen**

There are not only disciplinary differences, but also different institutions have different profiles. It is important that the system allows institutions to sustain and develop individual profiles.

### **David Budtz Pedersen**

Indicators should work as instruments to assess the impact of the institution. But the system needs to be more nuanced. Publishing indicators could provide analysis if the publication reaches the appropriate audience. It is impossible to create a value free mission for educational institutions. The indicators need to be designed to measure how the values of the institutions are accomplished.

### **Peter van den Besselaar**

It is difficult to answer the question since there are different centralized and decentralized systems: e.g., even between the US and the UK, evaluation systems are different. Even with the global spread of research evaluation systems, the diversity remains high<sup>16</sup>. That can even be the case within a country, when the Higher Education system itself is diversified.

### **Ismael Rafols**

It is very important to underline the diversity of indicators that should be taken into account. One should underline the background for the world evaluation which is not neutral and comes from the world value. Universities are

---

<sup>16</sup> [https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Performance%20Based%20Funding%20report\\_JRC101043.pdf](https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Performance%20Based%20Funding%20report_JRC101043.pdf) (10.04.2020).

institutions designed to work for the public good. The values need to be identified: what is public good? It brings us to the core question of what the evaluation is for? It is definitely designed neither for numbers nor for academic prestige. The indicators should be developed to serve one basic question – how the university serves the public good. This is ultimately what the research evaluation should be about.

### **Gunnar Sivertsen**

There is the difficult question of how can we evaluate societal impact? Universities should present what they do for society. In the UK REF 2014 there was an impressive written exercise as almost 7000 cases of impact were submitted to a framework for evaluating societal impact. But still these impact cases were incidences of extraordinary impact. To evaluate normal day-to-day impact at the organizational level could be more interesting and valuable for organizational learning<sup>17</sup>.

### **Ismael Rafols**

After hearing about the goals of evaluation and about the tasks for universities and when compared to the evaluation systems of particular countries, it turns out that the evaluation policies and practices are far away from their real purpose. We need evaluation scenarios that help researchers and the institutions to improve their missions.

### **Peter van den Besselaar**

Measurement of the impact of research is important, also of everyday research activities. This should best focus on the conditions for impact, more than on publications. We developed for that the concept of ‘productive interactions’ between research and societal stakeholders who may use the knowledge<sup>18</sup>. Experts (people) may be more relevant than publications. When we look at memberships in committees or participation in certain advisory activities, we get better insight than when tracing the use of publications.

---

<sup>17</sup> <https://academic.oup.com/rev/article/29/1/66/5671805> (10.04.2020).

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.siampi.eu/Content/SIAMPI\\_Final%20report.pdf](http://www.siampi.eu/Content/SIAMPI_Final%20report.pdf) (10.04.2020).

**Question from the audience**

In the last century the number of scientists rapidly grew and doing research became a luxury good (when compared to declining value of success rate in grant applications). Maybe universities should concentrate on teaching and only some professors should be allowed to do research? Is the number of professors adequate to the amount of money spent on the educational system?

**Peter van den Besselaar**

It is necessary to do some research if one teaches in a university. However, there is obviously a tension of how the national higher education system should be organized to combine mass higher education on the one hand, and high-quality research on the other. The answer is not simple, but the relation between teaching and research may become less strong in future universities.

**Johan Jacquemin**

There is already a process of schools diversifying their profiles and some of them becoming more teaching oriented. The success rate in grant applications is strongly connected with government policy to make scholars apply to survive and obliges also some scientists to change their original research field. It should not be forgotten that there are important differences between countries in the general cost of education imposed on students. In that view, students' fees are an important source of income for some universities, like those in the UK, for example, while education is free or likely free in some others (like in France).

**Theresa Beiner**

In the U.S. we have the whole system of community colleges, which are 2-year schools where students receive "associate degrees". These schools emphasize teaching instead of scholarship by their faculty. Within the U.S., there are different levels of universities based on the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education<sup>19</sup>. My university is an R2 or a Research 2 docto-

---

<sup>19</sup> See The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, <https://carnegiclassifications.iu.edu/index.php> (10.04.2020).

ral university, which means it awards doctoral degrees and has “high research activity”<sup>20</sup>.

### **David Budtz Pedersen**

It is often argued that research-based teaching is one of the most important impact pathways of university researchers. It is students and graduates that carry knowledge with them from the university into society and practices, and hence create a mechanism or pathway for knowledge dissemination and knowledge exchange. While this argument is valid, it is only a necessary and sufficient condition for knowledge translation and knowledge mobilisation. Current levels of investments in research and innovation far exceed the production of knowledge needed for graduate and postgraduate educations. The advancement of research is also expected to create value and impact beyond purely educational benefits. This is a starting point for conversations about the application of indicators: we need diverse indicators that are able to evidence and reward research and educational activities as well as provide data about the ‘broader impact’ of research on society, economy and civic life – in order to fully acknowledge the ‘civic role’ of universities.

### **Gunnar Sivertsen**

Universities are not outside of society; they are an important part of society. Universities used to be exclusive to an elite, they are no longer so. Both education and research are important to society. How to fund both is a political question.

### **Peter van den Besselaar**

We observed the rising number of students, which obviously is reflected in a rising number of researchers and professors. There is a question whether funding policies are adequate to the different needs of teaching and research.

---

<sup>20</sup> The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, Basic Classification Description, [https://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/classification\\_descriptions/basic.php](https://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/classification_descriptions/basic.php) (10.04.2020).

**Question from the audience**

Polish policy requires scientists to pick from a box and qualify themselves in an appropriate shelf: between chemistry, physics, law etc. It limits me as a scientist in my interdisciplinary development. Is it common in other countries to divide scholars so sharply between different disciplines?

**Gunnar Sivertsen**

I believe not too many other countries do that, usually people are encouraged to overpass their basic specializations. In Norway we do not need to define our research between certain categories. On the contrary, my publication in a medical journal will count the same even if I am a historian.

**Ismael Rafols**

I know in the UK it was the same problem since there were seven different agencies supporting different disciplines and the qualification between disciplines was very important.

**Question from the audience**

What are the greatest challenges for science in the next 20 years from your experience?

**Johan Jacquemin**

I am afraid that if governments are doing nothing current knowledge in some specific scientific fields will completely disappear. We are losing knowledge every day and the significance of knowledge is reduced in society.

**Gunnar Sivertsen**

There is a great challenge that society is turning away from knowledge and the major task is to restore appropriate place for and trust in science in society. Science sometimes needs to contribute to the stability of society, taking care of its values and memories. Science also sometimes needs to help things change, e.g. contribute to the sustainability goals of the United Nations.

**David Budtz Pedersen**

Alignment of indicators, values and mission statements is an important starting ground for developing a local ‘theory of change’ for the university. Which change the university (or funding agency) wishes to see in society, is dependent on value statements. Without proper and clear value propositions, it is not possible to define indicators or alignment instruments and incentives. Also, the valuation of expertise in society hinges on treating ‘third mission’ activities as integral to the university’s deliverables. There will only be a broader societal appreciation of expertise if the university management appreciates the role of academic experts in providing research-informed advice to policy-makers, companies, media and others.

**Peter van den Besselaar**

For the social sciences and humanities, the next twenty years will show an increasing collaboration with parts of the natural sciences. Computational social science and the use of advanced information technology and big data may provide new instruments to analyse and understand better the dynamics of complex social systems and processes, such as the science and higher education systems. This would also help to discuss the issues we talked about today in a more evidence-based way.

**Theresa Beiner**

From my perspective the major threat is to the rule of law. I come from a country where there have been instances where legislators have threatened to defund the court system when a court issues a decision that correctly checks the legislature’s authority, and a President who exceeds his constitutional authority. You cannot sustain a civil society without the basic rule of law being respected.

**Ismael Rafols**

We start from the assumption that the impact of research is positive. However, we make choices about how the inventions are implemented. We were making mistakes by implementing our discoveries; for example we can imagine that we developed differently and wouldn’t face the current climate change

crisis. With the development of artificial intelligence, things are really scary; and we are developing things that we do not control. The major challenge for the universities is not to design our own disaster. Scientific knowledge is not necessarily for the good. The social responsibility of the university should be the primary idea for scientists to be aware of.

**Jacek Zralek closing remarks**

Just recently George Soros described in Davos, threats to open society and to our civilization. In the summary of his speech he said: “I believe that as a long-term strategy our best hope lies in access to quality education, specifically an education that reinforces the autonomy of the individual by cultivating critical thinking and emphasizing academic freedom”. The world crisis of democracy, of rule of law, and of the society as a whole connected with the enormous environmental crisis are consequences of our own mistakes. We are losing the ability of critical thinking and at least part of the responsibility goes to universities that concentrate on immediate applicability and economic efficiency of the research. In the long run evaluation systems must be designed to promote research that truly supports the development of society. Otherwise universities end up as non-competitive rivals to global companies’ labs.